Ancient India: A History of Its Culture and Civilization by D. D. Kosambi
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fashion Naidis' discussion of British India is top heavy with political narrative. After devoting two chapters to the conquest of India to 1858, he incorporates into one heterogeneous chapter of seventeen pages, entitled "The Impact of the West," everything from railway development to religious reform. While it is perhaps unfair in so short a book to expect detailed treatment of every subject, still five pages on Warren Hastings and three on the whole cultural revival of the nineteenth century hardly seem a fair balance.

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ANCIENT INDIA: A HISTORY OF ITS CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION. By *D. D. Kosambi.* (New York: Pantheon Books. 1965. Pp. xi, 243. $6.95.)

PROFESSOR Kosambi first ruffled the complacent serenity of the academic historians of India with the publication of his *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (1956). That work differed from the common run of histories of ancient India in two respects: it was the first serious and sophisticated attempt to interpret Indian history along generally Marxist lines; Kosambi was the first Indian historian systematically to press into the service of historical writing materials from anthropological observations. These two factors, however, tended to become overcompensated when the exigencies of Marxist theory led to the forcing of facts into the dialectic materialistic mold, and anthropological data were overworked to explain historical phenomena separated from observations by a chasm of centuries, if not of millenniums. But Kosambi's work proved to be a much-needed corrective to prevailing trends in Indian historical writing which, until then, had generally ignored social and economic factors affecting the structure of history. The present work substantially reproduces the contents of the work of a decade ago under a new title.

The first chapter makes general observations on the importance of anthropological data in interpretations of ancient Indian history. This history, for Kosambi, is largely social and economic wherein theories on changes in the means and relations of production crowd the canvas to the extent of elbowing out dynastic and political history. He has nothing but contempt for political history as written by academic historians, and this contempt is his undoing. His book, without the benefit of a chronological or political matrix, breathlessly meanders through centuries. His best chapters are on Magadha and the Maurya Empire; his last chapter is rather a disappointing attempt to chronicle the history of post-Maurya ancient India, a period of nearly twelve hundred years, in thirty pages. Entire periods of intellectual and social history are dismissed in a few pages. The academic historian will fail to be impressed with the "historical" content of the book; the general reader, for whom it was presumably prepared, may find the work frustrating at times. Like its predecessor of ten years ago, Kosambi's present work will be found provocative by those who will read him for the first time. To others, it is an old thesis.

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